

## READING TIME FOR YOUNG FOLKS

### THE TALE OF A SLAVE

IF YOU EVER GO to Algiers in northwestern Africa on the shores of the Mediterranean, you will hear the story of Geronimo, and this is the story they will tell you.

Geronimo was an Arab, a native of Algeria. (See the sketch on this page and the map on page 198.) He was born in the middle of the sixteenth century. He was taken captive during an expedition made by the Spanish garrison of Oran, and was baptized into the Christian faith.

When he was eight years old, however, he managed to escape and join his friends. Persuaded by them, he then renounced his new religion and became once more a Mohammedan. But the teaching he had received during his captivity had made a deep impression upon him. He returned to the Spanish garrison and became a Christian.

Some time afterwards, however, when out in a boat, he fell once more into the hands of enemies, this time a band of Moorish pirates who carried him to Algiers, and sold him as a slave in the market-place of his native city.

Now, when he and his fellow-captives were standing in the slave-market wondering whether they would have kind masters or cruel, Geronimo was singled out on account of his manly bearing by an agent of the governor of the city, who paid the price demanded.

His master proved to be a stern and

cruel man, who would do anything—no matter how cruel—in order to carry out his purpose. In this respect he was no different from some of the cruel dictators of Europe and their agents at the present time.

The governor told his overseer to see to it that Geronimo gave up his religious beliefs. This, however, Geronimo firmly refused to do. His master became infuriated, and treated him with great brutality.

When he found this had no effect, he offered him great rewards, and even liberty itself, if he would do as he wished. But Geronimo remained steadfast.

About that time, a new fort was being built, and Geronimo, with other laborers, was working there. Part of his duty was to make huge blocks of cement for the walls of the fort. The process was this: the cement was mixed in great quantities, much as it is today, and then shovelled into big wooden boxes.

When it had set, the boxes were removed, and the solid masses were carried away and placed in position.

One day, as the governor strode among the workmen, his eye fell upon Geronimo. It occurred to him that he could inflict a terrible punishment upon Geronimo. He would give his slave another chance of giving up his religion, and if he refused he should be buried alive in one of those boxes of cement.

Geronimo was brought forward and



*A Native of Algiers*



Find Algiers on this map of northwestern Africa.

given his choice. He refused. The governor, beside himself with fury, ordered the brave fellow's hands and feet to be bound, and the cruel sentence was carried into execution.

The great block of concrete, with the body of the heroic slave inside, was placed in the wall of the fort. As the deed was finished, the governor, who perhaps had hoped in his heart that Geronimo would not hold out, was heard to exclaim: "I never thought that dog would die with so much courage."

The event reached the ears of one of Geronimo's old friends, a Spanish monk, who wrote it down. That was in the year 1569. Nearly three hundred years after, in 1853, it was found necessary to destroy the fort, and the man in charge of the work determined to see if the story of Geronimo were true.

After much patient digging and searching his labors were successful, for on December 7, of the year 1853, he discovered the martyr's remains enclosed in the masonry as had been described by the old monk three hundred years before.

The bones were carefully removed and

buried with great ceremony in the Cathedral of St. Philippe where they rest to this day in a marble tomb.

As a further memorial of Geronimo's splendid fidelity and courage, plaster of Paris was run into the mold formed by his body in the concrete block, and a perfect model, showing not only his features, but also the cords that bound him and even the texture of his clothing, was produced. This now lies in the government museum at Algiers, and that is why, if you go there, you will hear the story of Geronimo.

#### QUESTIONS

1. Where is Algiers?
2. Describe the dress of a native man of Algiers.
3. Who was Geronimo?
4. What happened to him when he was a boy?
5. Tell about his religion.
6. What happened to him later?
7. Who bought Geronimo?
8. What kind of man was the governor?
9. What did he want Geronimo to do?
10. What did Geronimo say?
11. What did the governor do to Geronimo?
12. When did this occur?
13. How was the story verified three hundred years later?
14. What was done with the remains of Geronimo?
15. What memorial was made?